

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) Valve assembly for load pressure-independent control of consumers, including a main valve for regulating a pressure medium flow to or from the consumer, wherein in a pressure medium flow path between a work port and the main valve a shut-off valve is arranged which permits a pressure medium flow to the work port and which is capable of being controlled open in the opposite direction through the intermediary of a pilot valve, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein a pilot piston of the pilot valve is capable of being raised from a pilot control seat by displacing a main slide of the main ~~valve~~ valve, and the valve axis of the pilot valve is arranged at a parallel distance from the axis of the shut-off valve and about coaxially with the axis of the main valve, and the main slide and the pilot piston are capable of being taken into contact via a tappet.

2. (Currently Amended) Valve assembly in accordance with Claim 1, wherein ~~there~~ the tappet is formed on the main ~~slide~~ slide, ~~a tappet capable of being taken into contact against the pilot piston.~~

3. (Currently Amended) Valve assembly in accordance with ~~Claim 2~~ Claim 1, wherein the tappet is formed on an insert member inserted in an end face of the main slide.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Previously Presented) Valve assembly in accordance with Claim 1, wherein the pilot valve and the shut-off valve are arranged in a common valve housing that is added on to an end face of a valve disc accommodating the main valve.

6. (Previously Presented) Valve assembly in accordance with Claim 5, wherein at least one work port is formed at the valve housing.

7. (Previously Presented) Valve assembly in accordance with Claim 1, wherein a spring chamber of the shut-off valve is capable of being connected via the pilot valve with a low-pressure port, preferably a control port conducting the control pressure that acts on the main slide in a direction away from the pilot valve.

8. (Previously Presented) Valve assembly in accordance with Claim 7, wherein the pilot piston includes fine-control notches for gradually opening the connection to the low-pressure port.

9. (Previously Presented) Valve assembly in accordance with Claim 1, wherein the shut-off valve is followed downstream by a pressure/anti-cavitation valve.

10. (Previously Presented) Valve assembly in accordance with Claim 9, wherein a port of the pressure/anti-cavitation valve is connected via a tank bore with a tank port, the tank bore encompassing a housing cartridge of the shut-off valve as an annular chamber.

11. (Previously Presented) Valve assembly in accordance with Claim 1, wherein there is associated to the main slide at least one reset spring means acting, after a predetermined initial stroke of the main slide, contrary to the actuation force necessary for actuation of the pilot piston.

12. (Previously Presented) Valve assembly in accordance with Claim 11, wherein the reset spring means comprises a reset spring supported on a spring cup that enters into contact against a contact shoulder following the initial stroke.

13. (Previously Presented) Valve assembly in accordance with Claim 5, wherein the housing cartridge merges into a work passage of the valve disc.

14. (Previously Presented) Valve assembly in accordance with Claim 5, wherein with the aid of the main valve a variable metering throttle is formed, downstream from which a pressure compensator accommodated in the valve disc is arranged.